

BLM News

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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RIP VAN WINKLE ABANDONED MINE CLEANUP ANALYSIS AVAILABLE

BLM Elko Field Office is announcing the availability of the administrative record and the Draft Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis for cleaning up the Rip Van Winkle abandoned mine and mill site.

The former Rip Van Winkle mine and mill site is located in Elko County, on the west side of Lone Mountain, twenty-five miles north of Elko, Nevada. Approximately 4.12 acres of undeveloped public land are contaminated by acid-generating and heavy metal-bearing tailings and waste rock from the production of lead, zinc and silver ore.

The Rip Van Winkle Mine operated from about 1915 until 1951, with minor production again occurring in 1954. All that remains of the mine and mill site are building foundations, collapsed shaft and adits, the remains of a rail haulage system, tailings ponds, and a waste rock dump.

The major concern at the site is that seven dams were built across Coon Creek, with an eighth dam built across an unnamed tributary of Coon Creek. Heavy metal-bearing mine tailings were placed behind six of the dams. Coon Creek and its tributary have breached the dams. Heavy metals and acid are leaching from the tailings and impacting Coon Creek, a tributary of Maggie Creek, which contains Lahontan cutthroat trout, a threatened species.

The BLM is proposing to clean up the Rip Van Winkle abandoned mine site. Four possible cleanup alternatives are analyzed in the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis. Two objectives of any cleanup would be to limit the contact of the tailings with water and limit the exposure of humans and animals to the tailings. Limiting the contact of tailings with water could be accomplished by either rerouting Coon Creek and its tributary or by removing the tailings from the streambed and flood plain of both streams. Limiting human and animal contact with the tailings could be accomplished by fencing the site or by capping the tailings.

The administrative record and the Draft Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis are available for review at two BLM offices during normal office hours:

Elko Field Office, (7:30 am – 4:30 pm)
3900 Idaho Street, Elko, Nevada

Nevada State Office, (7:30 am – 4:15 pm)

1340 Financial Boulevard, Reno, Nevada

The public is invited to comment on the proposed cleanup of the Rip Van Winkle abandoned mine site. The public comments will be accepted until April 25, 2003. For questions or more information, please contact Deb McFarlane by phone - (775) 753-0223, by email - Deb_McFarlane@nv.blm.gov, or by mail - 3900 Idaho St., Elko, NV, 89801.

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